



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

PLEA AGREEMENT REACHED WITH DEFENDANT IN NAVAJO NATION ASSAULT CASE

SALT LAKE CITY – Michael Whitehorse, age 20, of Montezuma Creek, Utah, arrested following a December incident on Navajo Nation land, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court this week to a Felony Information charging him with one count of abusive sexual contact.

As a part of a plea agreement reached with federal prosecutors, Whitehorse admitted that on Dec. 2, 2009, while on Navajo Nation land, he knowingly engaged in sexual contact with the victim while she was being forcibly restrained. Whitehorse is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. The indictment, which includes a charge of assault resulting in serious bodily injury, will be dismissed once Whitehorse is sentenced.

Also charged in the case are Cynthia Bitsuie, age 40, and Johnson Joe, age 42, both of Montezuma Creek. A change of plea hearing for Joe has been set for June 28, 2010, at 10:30 a.m. in Judge Ted Stewart's court. A four-day trial for Bitsuie starts Aug. 31, 2010.

Bitsuie, Joe, and Whitehorse were arrested after the Dec. 2, 2009, incident which allegedly happened in a remote area east of Montezuma

Creek. The indictment, which remains pending against Bitsuie and Joe, alleges they used force to sexually abuse the victim. The victim, left alone after the alleged assault, was able to drive herself to a hospital. Law enforcement officers were notified at that point. The case is being investigated by the FBI and Navajo Nation criminal investigators.

Whitehorse faces up to 10 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced Aug. 26, 2010, by U. S. District Judge Ted Stewart. Judge Stewart also ordered Whitehorse to undergo a psychosexual examination.

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